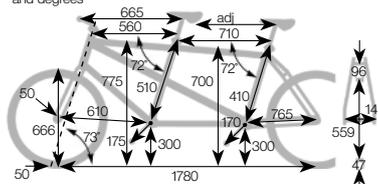




Dimensions in millimetres and degrees



ORBIT UNICORN 8

Price: £1350

Weight: 21.3kg

Size: M (20/16)

Sizes available: S (18/14), M (20/16), L (22/18)

Frame and fork: Aluminium frame, chromoly fork

Wheels: Orbit high flange hubs, Alex DH19 rims, butted spokes

Transmission: Truvativ 5D crossover drive, Shimano Acera V derailleurs, Altus shifters

Braking: Shimano Acera V brakes, Tektro Aquila cable disc brake

Steering and seating: Adjustable stoker stem, stoker bars, 400mm alloy seatposts

Accessories: Front and rear mudguards, rear rack

Contact: orbittandems.co.uk

TANDEM

Orbit Unicorn 8 tandem

Cycling journalist **Mike Davis** reviews a £1350, entry-level tandem with 26-inch and 700C wheel options

OFF-THE-SHELF tandems are rare beasts, but North Yorkshire's Orbit Tandems have a range of 16. The Unicorn 8 is the entry-level model, although the requirement to double up a lot of parts and the need for niche bits like crossover drivetrains means that 'entry level' is still well into four figures.

On a solo, the combination of Shimano Altus and Acera parts would be disappointing at this price, but in the world of tandems the Unicorn is competitively specified. Most importantly, the transmission works smoothly and reliably. The asking price



1 The rear V-brake (which has a second set of mounts to fit a 700C wheel) is a drag brake

2 It'll be light loads only for the rear carrier, as spacing out to clear the disc calliper weakens its mounting

also includes full mudguards and a rear rack.

The aluminium direct-lateral frame offers plenty of stiffness under power, and it steers accurately too. And a suspension seatpost softens the stoker's usually somewhat bumpier ride.

A fully adjustable stoker stem gives plenty of scope to customise the rear cockpit. As with most tandems, if captain and stoker are of similar height, one of you will have to compromise on fit – even at maximum stretch the rear cockpit is a good couple of inches shorter than the front one.

Stronger wheels

Orbit offer the Unicorn with either 26in or 700C wheels, using the same frame for both – there are two positions for the rear V-brake bosses. Our test bike was the 26in version, with a robust 36-spoke front/40-spoke rear wheel package. The rear wheel also uses a 145mm rear hub for better spoke triangulation.

The Unicorn is unusual among entry-level tandems in having a third brake as standard. The primary rear brake is a Tektro cable-operated disc brake, with a generous 203mm (8in)

rotor for plenty of heat dissipation. The rear V-brake is operated by a Shimano friction lever (pull it on and it stays on), acting as a drag brake.

Given the presence of a disc brake at the back, it's perhaps surprising that the Orbit's fork doesn't have disc mounts. But a safe front disc setup would need a stouter fork and that would give a harsher ride. The fork does have low-rider rack mounts, though.

While there are – on paper, at least – better-equipped tandems out there for similar money, the Orbit is well thought out, comes in a good range of sizes, and has a range of useful optional extras, making it a decent choice for an affordable leisure tandem.

Also consider



1) Dawes Discovery Twin £999

Similar spec to the Orbit at a lower price – lacks a second rear brake but frame and fork both have disc brake mounts. dawescycles.com

2) Circe Helios Duo £1199

Hugely versatile and adjustable small-wheeled entry-level tandem. Can be adapted for cargo carrying or double childseat use. circecycles.com